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AUTHOR	Brubaker, Dale L.; Nelson, Roland H., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

A basic premise of this essay is that educational organizations perform certain functions for students in order to attain purposes, goals, and objectives, and in turn these functions influence what social studies educators can and cannot do in curriculum and instruction. It is argued that teachers of the social studies must learn about the politics of school organization and become involved in the political process in such organizations. In the first two sections of the essay it is shown that the purposes, goals, and objectives shape the way the functions of schools are performed and that the emphasis given to each function is an expression of the organization's purposes. The concluding section discusses dimensions of the decision-maker in social studies curriculum and instruction and how he can get the most out of his present school organizational structure while working toward a new school organizational structure. This proposed structure is described as one that places governance functions in the hands of bureaucrats and curriculum and instruction in the hands of the teachers. The teacher's role in accomplishing this model is described as promoting learning to know oneself, to know one's organization, and to know how to change both the organization and self. (Author/KSM)

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The School as an Organization

A Determinant of Social Studies Curriculum and Instruction

by

Dale L. Brubaker and Roland H. Nelson, Jr.

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THE SCHOOL AS AN ORGANIZATION: A DETERMINANT OF SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

By Dale L. Brubaker and Roland H. Nelson, Jr.
University of North Carolina, Greensboro

The social studies methods class was never quite the same. The tenor of the guest speaker's remarks was obvious from his introductory remarks. "There seem to be three criteria for the selection of most content for social studies curriculum and instruction: (1) the person being studied is dead; and/or (2) the issue being studied is dead; and/or (3) the subject matter being studied is far enough away. I couldn't understand this for some time but it suddenly started to make sense to me. To do otherwise, study and interact with those close at hand, would be too controversial and could well threaten one's chances for promotion--perhaps to tenure or an administrative position. For example, it is much easier and less controversial to study a minimum wage bill in Congress and deplore its weaknesses than it is to find out about and set a course of action in behalf of the custodian in the hall or the workers in the school lunchroom." Support for the guest speaker's remarks is found in surveying literature for social studies educators, for primary emphasis is given to curriculum and instruction, particularly methods and materials, and to a lesser degree objectives and evaluation. Materials for social studies curriculum and instruction largely focus on issues facing people in society outside the school almost to the neglect of how people relate to each other in the school as an organization.[1] In other words, we have studied politics in the larger society outside of school but in the process have for the most part failed to understand and involve ourselves in any systematic way in our immediate environment--the school as an organization. (See Figure 1.)

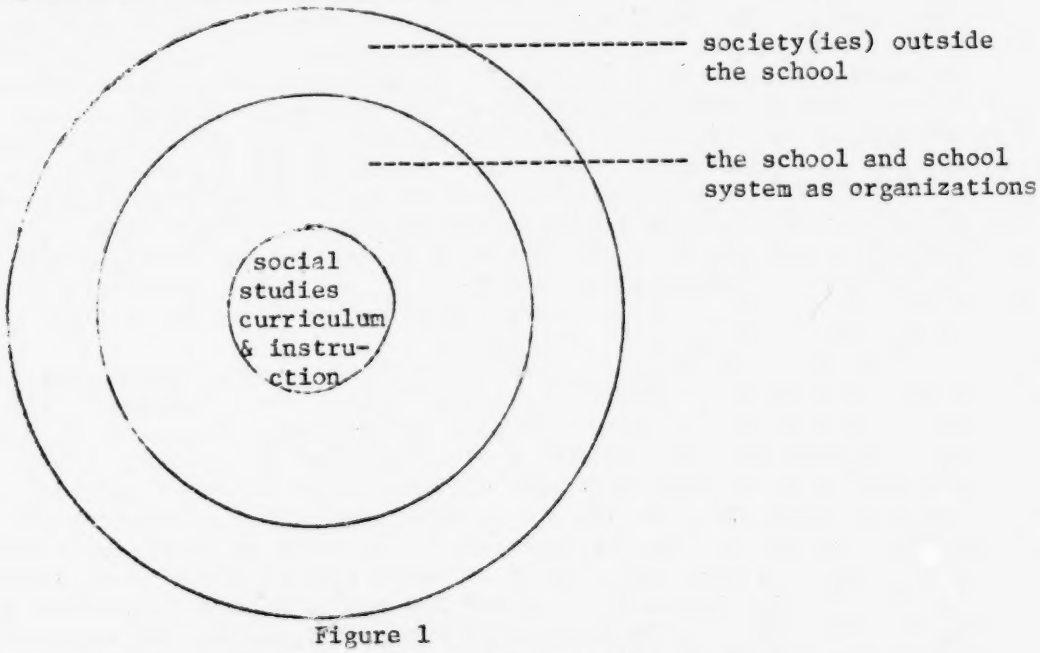

Figure 1
SOCIAL STUDIES AND SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

[1]The extent to which teacher preparation classes in general and social studies methods classes in particular focus on school organization is an open question.

What is being argued in this essay is that attention should be given to the politics of school organization and ways in which teachers of the social studies, elementary and secondary, can systematically become involved in understanding and participating in the political process in such organizations.

Every teacher faces a basic dilemma that must be reconciled: he or she has unlimited desires but limited resources. (Note that this is not identified as a problem to be solved but a dilemma to be reconciled.) This basic dilemma clearly places responsibility on the social studies educator and removes him or her from the role of passive bystander. Many of the forces that limit and expand resources for the decision-maker can be understood by focusing on the school and school system as organizations. The first thing to note about educational organizations in general and schools in particular is that they perform certain functions for students in order to reach purposes, goals, and objectives. These functions in turn influence what social studies educators can and cannot do in curriculum and instruction.

FIVE FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOLS

Confinement, the first of the five functions, means that a person must be in a certain place for a specified period of time regardless of his or her personal wishes about being there. Schools confine students in a number of ways, some prescribed by law (that is, the state legislature, the state board of education, and the local school board), some by school rules and regulations, and others by the teacher in the classroom. Knowing the source(s) of pressure to confine students is the first step for the social studies educator. Secondly, it is important to know the kind of confinement and degree of confinement that are prescribed by the source(s). Let us examine one source's pressure on a teacher of social studies to confine her students. The source is a state legislature that requires students ages six to sixteen, to attend school for 180 days a year. The local school board interpreted the state law to mean that no student could leave the school grounds during school hours except under the supervision of a school official. The school administration interpreted this to mean that no student could leave the premises during the school day unless accompanied by a teacher. The teacher of the social studies interpreted this to mean that no student could leave the school during school hours unless all students left for a school-sponsored activity, for a teacher cannot teach classes and accompany students away from the school at the same time. The organizational principle that explains what happened is that as the initial rule or regulation filters down a bureaucratic hierarchy, it becomes increasingly prescriptive and hence restrictive. The ultimate result was to drastically limit options for curriculum and instruction.

Let us now examine how a different school organization reacted to the state law requiring students to attend school for a minimum of 180 days a year. The local school board saw no reason to interpret the law for administrators and teachers, for they trusted their professional judgment on this matter. The administrators in turn felt that teachers would use good judgment as to which students might visit museums, libraries, and other appropriate places in order to have richer learning experiences. Complaints as to students being in inappropriate places were viewed as exceptions to the general success of the liberal interpretation of the state law and as such were handled on an individual basis. As a result, the teacher of the social studies had expanded options for curriculum and instruction. In this case administrators and teachers were treated as professionals rather than bureaucrats.

Training is a second function schools perform for students. We have identified four areas in which training skills are expected to be learned: (1) reading, (2) writing, (3) speaking, and (4) modes of thinking. In many schools these skills are taught in such a way that they are biased against those who do not have an interest in becoming successful students or incipient scholars. Grades, the currency of the schools, are allotted accordingly. Forces outside the classroom push in on the teacher so that curriculum and instruction are designed to support the incipient scholar model: (1) tradition is one such force; (2) those who are themselves considered to be successful in the larger society realize that their childrens' success after graduation will depend on their playing the game according to the rules of the incipient scholar model; and (3) an advanced technological society such as ours requires a highly trained manpower pool, for we must have many doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, and others who are technically trained to maintain and increase the benefits of improved technology. (Although our main interest is presently in forces outside the teacher and classroom we must also add that teachers themselves are often a barrier to exploring innovative ways to teach training skills.)

Indoctrination as a school function simply means that a person or group is influenced by another person or group to behave in a certain way without even questioning whether or not this is the way the person or group wants to or should behave. Rewards are given for appropriate behavior, sanctions are applied for inappropriate behavior, and a general environment is created in which the behavior to be instilled becomes second nature to those being indoctrinated. One way schools do this is by filling the student's schedule with activities designed to promote the school's goals, though not necessarily the student's goals. This gives the student as little time as possible to pursue his or her individual desires. Some obvious things schools attempt to indoctrinate students to believe are: do well in your studies and you'll get ahead, hard work will result in good grades, and formal education is necessary for economic advancement. Less obvious is the attempt to inculcate an attitude toward authority which will result in unquestioning compliance with rules, regulations, and pronouncements. For example, students and teachers in some schools are expected not to question the "rightness" of not leaving the room without a pass and having restrooms locked between classes. At the same time social studies rhetoric has it that a good citizen in a democracy does not simply do what he is told but instead questions various authorities after which he or she makes up his or her own mind.

Sorting is the fourth function schools perform for students. What we often overlook is the tremendous power those who sort have. Is aspirin a drug or not? Is a person whose ancestry is ten percent black and ninety percent white a Negro or Caucasian? Decisions as to who should go to what school sort in such a way that social studies curriculum and instruction are highly influenced. During one school year an elementary teacher had all white students and during the following school year she had several black students. Her response was, "My social studies during the second year was an integrated class. During my first year social studies was reading the textbook." Forces outside the classroom do indeed influence social studies curriculum and instruction. A large part of the sorting process is not only to sort but to have students accept as legitimate the ways they are sorted. The whole system of grading as the major index of school success serves as an example.

Providing the conditions for personal or self-development is the final function schools claim they provide for students. Educational rhetoric promises the student the opportunity to examine who he or she presently is in relation to what he or she would like to become. It is not by accident that we have

placed this function last on our list of functions for this function is in our judgment treated incidentally, accidentally, and in an ancillary way in spite of its prominence in lists of stated goals. One reason for this is that the first four functions lend themselves to measurement: if the student accepts the four functions, his or her chances for getting good grades are greatly enhanced. Questioning of the degree to which the four functions are used and the manner in which the four functions are implemented is an expected part of the fifth function but the questioner will pay a price for posing such questions in most school systems. A simple example serves to illustrate this: the student who is engaged in the fifth function will need time to be alone. Introspection dictates this. And yet, many adults involved in the first four functions will find this to be threatening.

In concluding our discussion of the five functions of schools we add that we believe that all five functions are provided in some measure by all schools as organizations. However, we believe there can be a good deal of flexibility in the way the functions are performed and the degree of emphasis placed on each function.

PURPOSES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Organizations, sub organizations, and individual decision makers have purposes, goals, and objectives that influence social studies curriculum and instruction. In order to demonstrate the influence of the organization on social studies curriculum and instruction we have made a distinction between purposes, goals, and objectives. For the moment our focus will be on purposes, goals, and objectives of the school as an organization and their impact on social studies curriculum and instruction.

Purposes are the overall aims of an organization. The organization can control its purposes only in a limited way, since so many external forces exercise control over those purposes. Members of one school system, for example, were excited about establishing a new experimental school but had to settle for less since failure to pass a bond issue seriously curtailed funds. The purposes of an organization can be best understood if the organization is viewed as constantly moving or trying to move from one purpose level to another. Any organization may at one time be performing some functions at one level and others at another level, but it will be operating primarily at one purpose level at one given point in time. We have adapted Maslow's needs hierarchy as a model to explain the purpose hierarchy of organizations.[2] These levels are, in ascending importance:

Level 1--Survival: the organization's very existence is at stake.
Level 2--Commergence: the organization wants to be known as a "status" institution that belongs with other "status" institutions.
Level 3--Differentiation: secure in belonging, the organization can now differentiate and take some chances.

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[2]See chapters 4, 5, and 8 of A.H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954).

Level 4--Self-actualization: experimentation and creativity are the norm.

An innovative teacher of the social studies introduced a variety of innovations in a single year: flexible scheduling, team teaching, and multi-media approaches to instruction. Largely as a result of this teacher's enthusiasm and expertise, the school as an organization was in the process of moving from the commergence to the differentiation level. At the end of the year the principal who had given a good deal of support to the innovative teacher, and others who were like-minded, resigned to accept a superintendency in a nearby city. His replacement was a friend of the superintendent from graduate school years. He wanted to introduce many and diverse innovations and saw last year's innovations as very mild and largely ineffective. Most teachers in the school were highly threatened and the school seemed to be paralyzed for a period of time. The purpose level of the organization slipped to the survival level.

Goals are statements of generalized intent. Their abstract nature makes them ideal for public relations statements and for operating guidelines for those who work within an organization. Goal statements are not quantifiable and hence do not lend themselves to measurement. Since they are so general, there is usually minimal disagreement about goal statements until they are operationalized-more specifically, until given objectives are set forth that are supposed to help meet the stated goals of the organization. Examples of goals are:

> Education should provide for the general welfare of students.
> Citizens in our society and schools should know that they are entitled to due process of law.
> Good citizenship is the major goal of the schools.

Goals enable those within the schools to have bench marks against which they can judge specific actions. For example, if a school had as a goal, "Education should provide for the general welfare of students," and a teacher consistently treated students in a manner that in the judgment of the administration and/or her colleagues did not provide for the students' general welfare, the goal could be used to bring the teacher to task--specifically, to ask her to justify her actions in terms of the stated goal.

Objectives are specific statements that are quantifiable. Some examples of objectives are:

> Administrators and teachers should demonstrate their loyalty to school goals by working for full attendance on the day the State takes roll for financial apportionment reasons.
>
> Teachers should demonstrate that they are responsible employees by policing the halls between classes.
>
> Teachers will receive their final paycheck of the year after handing in their grades.

Objectives should of course contribute to goals, and they should be consistent with each other. One of the problems in working with objectives is that they may become the total focus of the school to the point that those making decisions lose sight of the original goals of the organization. If this happens, external forces may well begin to exert so much pressure that an organization operating at the differentiation stage of maturity may find itself

reduced to operating at the commergence stage, or even possibly at the survival stage. This phenomenon of overly focusing on objectives is referred to by many social scientists as "goal displacement."

Once again, we can see that the objectives, goals, and purposes of the teacher of the social studies do not exist in isolation from outside influences. In particular, we have demonstrated that the purposes, goals, and objectives of the school as an organization have a decided influence on social studies curriculum and instruction.

YOU AS THE DECISION-MAKER IN SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

In the first two sections of this essay we have argued that the purposes, goals, and objectives of the school as an organization shape the way the five functions of schools are performed for students. That is, the degree of emphasis given to each function and the manner in which the emphasis is given to each function are an expression of the organization's purposes, goals, and objectives. In the concluding section of this essay we wish to give attention to how you, the decision-maker in social studies curriculum and instruction, can get the most out of your present school organizational structure while at the same time working toward a new school organizational structure that we propose.

Most schools are presently organized bureaucratically for both governance and curriculum and instruction. Governance encompasses (and translates) the formal, legal rules and regulations which control the overall operation of the organization. Curriculum and instruction refers to that area within the school where learning experiences that students encounter occur. The following illustrates the distinction between governance and curriculum and instruction matters:

Governance	Curriculum and Instruction
Rules concerning health and safety in the school.	The choice of course titles and content for such courses.
Directives concerning the maintenance of buildings.	Sequence and scope of the curriculum.
The decision to initiate a bond issue	Choice of textbooks and other instructional materials.
Particular accounting procedures for the receipt and dispersal of funds.	Decisions with respect to ability grouping.

Governance is appropriately a function of a bureaucratic organization. That is, when the primary concern of the organization is public reaction, the bureaucratic organizational model provides the appropriate model for dealing with such reaction, for disciplined compliance, hierarchial arrangements, and a causal relationship between means and ends all exist. The bureaucratic model does, however, fall short for curriculum and instruction, for in this area:

1. the ends are not discreetly measurable due to the abstractness of the goals;
2. the means for reaching the goals are not agreed upon; and
3. the causal relationship between means and ends is not readily or concretely demonstrable.

As Blau and Scott indicate, "When the overall responsibility of the organization cannot be broken down into fairly routine specialized tasks..., expert judgments of professionals rather than disciplined compliance with the commands of superiors must govern operations ...."[3]

What we are arguing for is a new organ[illegible]nal model for schools with governance functions in the hands of bureaucr[illegible] and curriculum and instruction in the hands of professionals (the teachers).[4] It is helpful to think of hospitals as organizations with the doctors responsible for professional matters and the nurses and others responsible for bureaucratic matters. Tension between the bureaucratic and professional elements in our organizational model is considered inevitable and a dilemma to be reconciled rather than a problem to be solved.

You might well be thinking, "The model sounds good but what do I as a decision-maker in social studies curriculum and instruction do in the meantime?" We suggest that you begin by realizing that there are three dimensions of decision-making: (1) know yourself, (2) know your organization, and (3) know how to change your organization and yourself. (See Figure 2.)

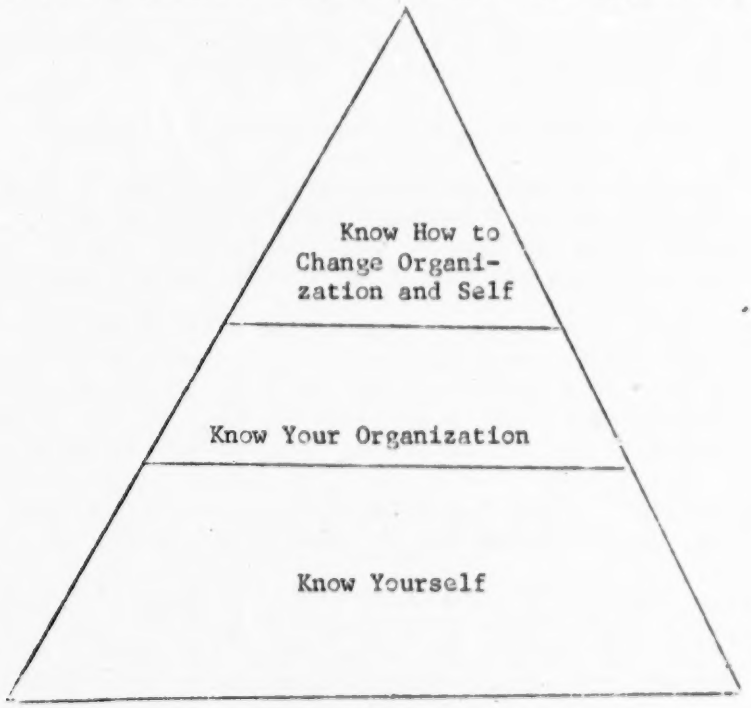

Figure 2

THREE DIMENSIONS OF DECISION-MAKING

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[3]Peter M. Blau and W. Richard Scott, Formal Organizations (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1962), pp. 206-210.

[4]We are presently involved in a school that has adopted the organizational model that we propose for schools. The school, Terawa Terrace II, is part of the Camp Lejeune Dependents' School System under the leadership of Superintendent P. Talmadge Lancaster. In effect there are two "principals" in the school--one in charge of governance matters and the other in charge of curriculum and instruction. The evolution of this school is described in a monograph "Inservice Can Make A Difference" which may be secured by writing the authors of the present essay.

The decision-maker who begins at the "how to change' level without benefit of knowledge of himself or the school as an organization is very inconsistent and this will be indicated in his decision-making pattern. His disorientation will be apparent. He may appear to be charismatic and dynamic but zigs and zags in his decision-making pattern will indicate that he is seriously lacking in logically consistent underpinnings. The decision-maker who begins at the "know your organization" level without accurate knowledge of himself will simply be a midwife for the ideas of others.

We would suggest that part of knowing yourself is knowing how much of yourself you are willing to commit in a given situation. We have adopted a hierarchy consisting of six levels of intensity of commitment in descending order:

(1) I'll sacrifice my life and/or the lives of my family and/or those I dearly love.

(2) I'll give up the respect of those whom I love and I'll forego my status and professional achievement.

(3) I will forego economic security and my career.

(4) I will have serious conflicts between what I think should be done and my reluctance to do it. I may have to alter my work style and give up those techniques which had previously been successful and beneficial and learn new ones.

(5) I will have to alter some habits with which I'm quite comfortable, thus making my job somewhat more difficult. I will feel uncomfortable from time to time as I'll do things that don't seem to be the best way to do them based on my past experience and present assumptions.

(6) It doesn't make any difference as past experience dictates. My choice, therefore, is between tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum.

We offer three suggestions in the form of generalizations with regard to the hierarchy. First, one should recognize that others have different levels of commitment to any value that place such decisions at different levels of the value hierarchy. Second, it is wise whenever possible to keep from escalating on the value hierarchy, for it is emotionally draining to constantly be part of confrontation politics with little or no chance for compromise. Third, one should deescalate whenever possible for to do so creates conditions for a more rational and normal situation whereby different members of the organization can go about their work.

It is also helpful to recognize the distinction between actor and reactor in any given decision-making situation. The main advantage in the acting rather than reacting role is that the actor usually controls more variables in the situation than those who must react to his offensive. Although there are times when you may wish to simply "ride it out" by reacting, it is important to recognize that there are times when you must play the role of actor to achieve your goals and objectives.

As a decision-maker involved in the decision-making process, you have four main sources of power that you can use in different situations: positional authority, charisma, expertise, and succorance. The first three sources are self-explanatory but the fourth source deserves some explanation. Succorance is a kind of informal encouragement that we associate with coaches, counselors, and the like. It says, "Come on, I know you can do it." It is how you draw on these four sources of power that will determine how well you reconcile the basic decision-making dilemma of unlimited desires and limited resources.

Finally, let us say with regard to the "know yourself" category that interaction with others in the organization will provide you with the opportunity to try out various aspects of yourself in different situations which is another way of saying that you get to know yourself in part by knowing others.

There are many questions you can ask when you encounter an organization such as a school. The following outline suggests some of these questions:

(1) Who decides what teachers will teach here? Who decides who gets promoted? Who decides who gets salary increases?

(2) What's happened recently? What new curriculum proposals have been initiated? By whom? How?

(3) What problems have occurred recently in the organization? Who decided they were problems? What was done? By whom?

(4) If you want to get something done, who would you see and what would you tell him or her?

(5) What are some things you want to do that you're unable to do with the present organization? How do you know you can't? Rule? Regulation? Someone told you? Feeling that its against tradition?

(6) Is this organization different from other organizations you know? How?

(7) If you could replace three people in the organization, who would you replace and why would you replace them?

It is important to note that an organization should be viewed as a living organism whose shape is always changing, and part of the shaping process is in your hands as a decision-maker in the organization. We have argued that knowledge of who you are, what you would like to be, and what you think you can be is an essential part of the decision-making process. Secondly, our discussion of organizational functions, purposes, goals, and objectives was based on our belief that this knowledge is essential in understanding social studies curriculum and instruction. Finally, we believe that you, the teacher of the social studies, can make a real difference in getting the most out of your present school organizational structure while at the same time working toward a new school organizational model.[5]

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[5]The authors' book Creative Survival in Educational Bureaucracies (Berkeley, Calif: McCutchan Publishing Co., 1974) has a more detailed discussion of how you can get the most out of your present organizational structure while at the same time working toward a new school organizational model.